

Remarks on Energy Legislation

June 26, 2009

Today the House of Representatives took historic action with the passage of the American Clean Energy and Security Act. It's a bold and necessary step that holds the promise of creating new industries and millions of new jobs, decreasing our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, and strictly limiting the release of pollutants that threaten the health of families and communities and the planet itself. Now it's up to the Senate to take the next step. And I'm confident that in the coming weeks and months the Senate will demonstrate the same commitment to addressing what is a tremendous challenge and an extraordinary opportunity.

As always happens when we debate issues of this magnitude, we see lines of demarcation. There are those who argue that the status quo is acceptable, those who would have us continue our dependence on foreign oil and our reliance on fossil fuels despite the risks to our security, our economy, and the planet. But the American people know that the nation that leads in building a 21st century clean energy economy is the nation that will lead in creating a 21st century global economy. I want America to be that nation. And with this vote, the House has put America on the path to being that nation.

The fact is, just weeks ago, few in Washington believed that this day would come to pass. The best bet, the safe bet, was that after three decades of failure, we couldn't muster the political will to tackle the energy challenge despite the necessity and urgency of action. But although Washington may not see it yet, there is a spirit of change that's taken hold across this country. As has happened at every critical juncture in our history, the American people are demanding that we abandon the failed policies and politics of the past; we no longer accept inaction; that we face up to the challenges of our time. And today the House has done exactly that.

I want to thank Speaker Pelosi for what was a prodigious effort on behalf of this measure. I also want to thank and recognize the chairs of the committees that worked so hard on this bill: Henry Waxman, Collin Peterson, Charlie Rangel. I want to acknowledge John Dingell, Ed Markey, Rick Boucher, and Mike Doyle, as well as many others who worked long and hard to get to this day. They spent months carefully crafting a plan that's sensitive to vulnerable communities and industries, and that ushers in a critical transition to a clean energy economy without untenable new burdens on the American people.

By creating a system of clean energy incentives, this bill complements our earlier actions to raise automobile fuel-efficiency standards, to double our capacity to generate electricity from sources like wind and sun, and to make significant new investments in the research and development of homegrown, renewable sources of energy.

So I look forward to continuing this work with the Senate so that Congress can send me a bill that I can sign into law, and so that we can say, at long last, that this was the moment when we decided to confront America's energy challenge and reclaim America's future. That's what this vote was about. It was a victory of the future over the past. And that's what America is all about.

Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 2454.

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Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Boucher, Frederick C.; Dingell, John D., Jr.; Doyle, Michael F.; Markey, Edward J.; Pelosi, Nancy; Peterson, Collin C.; Rangel, Charles B.; Waxman, Henry A.

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